

Dear Mary,

1/10/91

Among the minor plagues of the accumulating years that for the past few days have beset me prompt me to begin with apologies for the typing. And I may write you with some interruptions. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, my fingertips and thumbs at their ends have split. So I'm typing with two middle fingers. Only starting because in a few minutes we have for Lil's dental checkup. Fortunately, it is just before the prediction for the season's heaviest snow.

It is not important, but because I have only a few minutes, I learned when we farmed about a dozen miles southeast of here that winter snows that come from the weather you send us tend to repeat themselves in 6-7 day periods. And I'd know in advance when such weather was about to blast us because that was the only time I could ever hear the B & O trains from this or a slightly greater distance to the southwest of us. Farmers learn such things and I can't remember a single time that forecast was not correct.

What you report is the one thing I did not suspect. I know that Buck had been fighting that problem for years but he had demonstrated to me that he had beaten it. I remember the week I spent with you. Buck bought the whiskey, brought it home unopened, poured just about every drop I drank, and didn't touch a drop himself.

Reminds me of when I was young and working on a morning paper while going to college and got to where I was drunk every day. I had the incentive of three of those I worked with being hospitalized with DTs. So, with the legislature going into special session, which meant more work and more tiredness for all of us, which usually meant more drinking when the paper went to bed, I decided that as long as that special session lasted I'd pour every drop the others drank that they did not take from the bottle and not touch the stuff myself. I've been able to take it or leave it since, more than 55 years.

It is a few minutes after 4 a.m. and, as usual, I've been up for an hour, trying to follow my usual practice, sitting and reading before getting to what for me now passes as work and I found that I was not able to concentrate on what I was reading and could not get my mind to reading and correcting what I'd written where I'd left off yesterday when we got the mail. You and Buck have been on my mind. I suppose that this is because among some of us old timers despite some differences we do care. I've been trying to think of something I might say that could mean anything to you. I don't get very far.

As I began to read your letter yesterday the first thing that came to mind was that maybe you should speak to ~~Mr~~ Gary Schoener. Then I realized as I read ~~Arthur~~ that you seem to have taken all the steps possible. Then I wondered if he had ~~me~~ ever been down there, if you'd ever met. And when I'd finished reading your letter I was impressed by you, your honesty and forthrightness. It is impressive. Without any self-delusion. You are indeed a solid old gal to handle this so well atop all you have been through. I don't know what you read when we were young but the words of a syndicated columnist you may not ever have heard of comes to mind, O.O. MacIntire. Once when he was writing about something he had praised for considered praiseworthy, he concluded with, "a curt bow and a swifling cape to you!" I don't know why, after almost 60 years, I remember those words. Ordinarily his stuff was a bit frothy. He was a "roadway columnist, not a deep thinker, but they have lingered in my mind for saying something I then considered good, as saying something if perhaps with excessiveness, but I mean them and address them to you for your letter and what I think it reflects of you after and again under such great duress.

I guess that when I was so young and was able to take and keep control it was because we are better able to do this when we are young, and that as we accumulate the years and with them so many stresses this becomes ever so much more difficult. There get to be just too many stresses and as we bear them there comes the one that is just too much. I'm so proud of you for writing at such length and in such detail without a word of, without even a suggestion of condemnation, of Buck or of yourself. I have ~~me~~ a better idea of

what you have been and are going through than you can imagine because Lil's younger sister did it ⁶⁰years. When she and her husband ~~had~~ had the problem they were much younger than you and Buck. But by the time he did stop, and he did, really, his health was utterly ruined. She looked out for him as one would a baby, and when he died, then and since I've not heard her say a word against him. Not a word condemning him, But Lil and I saw her suffering. And her coping.

Yesterday off and on and this early morning my favorite book of the bible keeps coming to mind, Ecclesiastes. (Did you know this piece of the old testament was also JFK's favorite book of the bible that was not part of his religious upbringing?) Some ago those old boys said it like it still is today and it can bring comfort and a degree of understanding to us today. If you are not familiar with it there are many figures of speech that have to be puzzled out, like ~~keepers~~ "keepers of the house," meaning our bones. It begins "Vanity oh vanity, sayeth the preacher," and before long words I'm sure you've heard, that all the rivers do run into the sea but the sea is not full, and that the sun riseth and the sun setteth but the earth endureth ~~forever~~ forever." The "eths" I am sure are the formulation of the Elizabethian scholars who did that King James translation from the Greek, and they added some anti-Semitism that was not in the original, but by and large it is remarkably faithful and aside from all else they evolved a great work of magnificent literary beauty along with the enduring philosophy.

There comes a time when we can only ~~hope~~ hope, even when there appears to be no reason for any hope, and sometimes we are lucky. I was a year ago. I didn't learn it until fairly recently, and then only by accident. The local cardiologist did not level with me but he did with the family doctor who, in an unguarded moment told me and me that the cardiologist did not expect me to survive the openheart surgery. In ~~fact~~ fact Johns Hopkins would have sent me home after six days but I had no transportation I could trust that day, a day ~~like~~ like today, which has begun with the predicted show storm. So, I returned the next day, in a heavy car driven by a friend with many years of driving experience. What I am saying is that when there appears to be no hope at all there sometimes is.

Not the first time with me. I had two emergency operations after I got the plastic artery in my left thigh. I did not realize for years that those doctors also did not tell me what they could and should have, but the morning after, really later that morning, because they worked on me until 2 a.m., one of them told me they had not expected me to make it because they believed my heart could not take the strain. So, I am saying again from personal experience, that what seems to be impossible isn't always and does not have to be. This is reason to hope against hope.

If you did not meet him when he was in Dallas working on his master's thesis that became his excellent documentary, "Reasonable Doubt," Chip Selby, a fine young man, would have driven me home after the heart surgery, as he did after the cataract was removed from my better eye. And he is a good and a safe driver. But he wore his car out working on his documentary. It had over 150,000 miles on it and rather than take the slight chance of some untoward event I preferred another day in the hospital. Chip is in Hollywood now working on a different kind of documentary, starting at the bottom, so to speak.

I suppose that whether or not you met Gary Schoener, there has been some contact. He is too busy for us to have much contact but we hear from him from time to time. He is a real pioneer in many useful areas of his discipline. I'm particularly proud of one. He was the first or one of the first to testify against therapists who took advantage of their women patients. And he is still doing it. Wonderful, unfearing human being! He also married late. They have a beautiful, happy little boy who came into the world with many birth defects. His survival is still in questions but Gary is still hopeful.

There is something I've been debating with myself about asking you about and now do. Do not take the time to respond now, because it is not urgent at all. I'm merely curious about something that you may be able to shed some light on. If there comes a

time you want to set your mind on something else maybe this will serve. I'll take your silence as meaning you have no explanation. For the moment I also ask that you keep this in confidence because there may be some developments that may be interesting.

Some years ago I got a phone call from a stranger in Dallas who was quite effusive in his ~~xxx~~ praises. He ordered my books and then wrote me an effusive letter. In it he said that he got to Washington from time to time on business and would like to come and visit me. I invited ~~him~~ him, any time. He said he had what he described as a "rare" picture of me. He told me nothing about himself and I forgot about it. But I did remember his name because it is unusual.

Then ~~I~~ I learned that Farris Bookstool III is a Dallas FBI Sa. So, not telling him that ~~I~~ I wrote and reminded him that he had promised me this "rare" picture of me and I was curious about it. Without any covering letter he mailed it to me. It was easy to identify where and when it was taken and with some certainty who had taken it. That made me wonder how the FBI had gotten it. I did file ~~information~~ requests of all FBI offices requesting all records relating to me and I did not get that from Dallas or Los Angeles.

I've not written Bookstool further asking him about this although perhaps I yet will. If he was at all genuine I do not want to make any trouble for him. In general I see no point in making any trouble anyway. Life gives us all more than we need anyway.

The picture was taken in Fred Newcomb's back yard in Sherman Oaks. I had just gotten the closest duplication possible of the Oswald rifle and had not yet had time to get the scope mounted. I suppose that Fred wanted a picture of me duplicating 133A and B, and that is this picture.

Now the ~~M~~ FBI got it and why does interest me. But it is no more than curiosity. I do not say this accusing Fred, although that is a possibility. He may have given the picture to others, for example, and may have had nothing to do with the FBI's getting a copy. The FBI is an enormous vacuum sweeper. It even has and gave me copies of a picture of me holding a goose. and with all the frightful things it did to ~~me~~ and me this is quite insignificant. That is why I say it is not important, just curiosity. I suppose the curiosity is largely about whether one who can fall within the meaning of "critic" did it. I know that the FBI had at least one symbol informer who penetrated the Los Angeles critics and at least one in San Francisco. (There was another in San Francisco who ~~tried~~ tried to ruin me and my book on one of the more important ~~black~~ shows but I was able to turn that around ~~it~~ it sold all my books then in the stores in that area out in a single day. They pulled the same thing in New York city with an even more spectacular benefit to me and the ~~book~~ first book.)

Ordinarily I have no interest in the books that pretend to solve the crime but I was sent a copy of Jim Moore's by someone who asked my opinion of it. I'd forgotten him as I've forgotten the names of almost all the many thousands who've written me but after reading what he said about me and our correspondence I checked the file and found I do not have all that correspondence. So, I wrote him a neutral letter and asked him if he'd please send me copies of those other than I had. I've heard nothing from him and my letter was not returned. He is a strange, egomaniacal man and what a sick book! He can't have much self-respect to have put his name on it or he has some objective in mind.

I've rambled. I do thank you for your honesty and I do hope that all goes well as it came for you and for Buck.

With all our hope for you,

Harold